

THE  
Rational Communicant:  
OR A,  
PLAIN ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
NATURE, ENDS, and BENEFITS  
OF THE  
SACRAMENT  
OF THE  
*LORD'S SUPPER.*

Suited to the MEANEST CAPACITIES.

By *Arthur Ashley Sykes.*

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Thomas Hollis

T H E

# Rational. Communicant :

O R A,

## PLAIN ACCOUNT, &c.

*Par.* **S** I R, I heard you yesterday with some satisfaction treating upon the subject of the Lord's Supper ; and if I remember right, you told us, that the Sacrament was an easy, plain, intelligible thing, and what people of the meanest capacities might understand, provided they would bring an ordinary attention, and love of truth with them. I hope, Sir, I have those qualifications, and shall rejoice if you will be so kind as to assist my weakness.

*Min.* The observation I made is certainly true ; nor do I think there are any great difficulties on that subject. However, if you have any, I will endeavour to give you the satisfaction you want.

*Par.* I shall readily propose such difficulties as occur to me ; but yet if you

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please you can lead me by proper questions, so as to make me more fully comprehend this holy *mystery*.

*Min.* Do not begin with words, which may do you an injury in your enquiries. The scriptures never call this sacred institution a *mystery*; and if they do not treat it as such, I can't imagine why we should. What is plain, and easy, and intelligible, should not be dressed up in terms, which in common use imply something *incomprehensible*.

*Par.* I will endeavour to observe this caution for the future. I beg of you therefore to acquaint me with what I ought to know concerning this institution of our Saviour.

*Min.* I will: But previously I must observe to you, that you can know no more than what our Saviour himself, or his Apostles have told us. Whatever therefore they have declared to be the *end*, or *design* of this Supper, That is the *end* and *design*, and nothing else: and if any man takes the liberty to assign *other ends* than those which Christ and



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and his Apostles have assigned, he must treat it not as *the Lord's Supper*, but as his *own Supper*; a Supper instituted for ends of *his own*, and not for those which our Saviour appointed.

*Par.* I understand you very well. Be pleased therefore to inform me what those *ends* are which our Lord assigned.

*Min.* Do not be in such haste. First understand the *institution* itself; and then you will come to the *ends* designed by it: and when you are apprized of these things, it will be fit to consider any difficulties or doubts which may arise in your mind.

*Par.* I shall very readily follow your own method.

*Min.* First then, It is fit that you should know, that our Saviour in the same night that he was betrayed *took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the Disciples, and said, Take, eat, this my Body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed*

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for many for the remission of sins. Matth. xxvi. 26, 27, 28. St Mark speaks of this in the same manner; adding this circumstance about the cup — *And they all drank of it.* ch. xiv. 22, 23, 24. St Luke, when he relates the institution, ch. xxii. 19, 20. has annexed, the end of the institution. — *This is my body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after Supper, saying, this cup is the New Testament of my blood, which is shed for you.* I will add the other place where this institution is mentioned, viz. 1 Cor. xi. 23—26. *The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me: After the same manner also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* I wish you would read over these passages of scripture carefully, and raise whatever difficulties occur to you from these places: because

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because by understanding these well, you will ease yourself of a great deal of trouble.

*Par.* I will do it.—I have done it, Sir, and find that I stand in need of your help. I perfectly understand what St *Matthew* says by—He *took bread*, and *brake* it, and *gave it to the Disciples*, and *said, Take, eat.* But what is meant by—*be blessed it?*

*Min.* He *gave thanks* to God, the great Creator of all things, for it. So says St *Luke* expressly, *He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it.*

*Par.* I understand it clearly; our Saviour did by this *bread*, as he did when he fed the multitude, *He looking up to heaven, blessed*, that is, *gave thanks* for it to his Father which is in heaven. *Matt.* xiv. 19. But pray what is the meaning of those other words—*This is my body?* How could the *bread* be the *body* of Christ, since his Disciples saw his body, and the bread, to be two different things?

*Min.*

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*Min.* The scripture language is very plain, unless people are willing to deceive themselves. When any one is looking upon the *picture* of the king, and knowing whose it is, says,—*This is the king*—No one from thence imagines, that the *picture* is literally the king in *person*, but only a proper *representation*, or, as the case may be, a proper *memorial*, of the king: So in the case before you, *This is my body*,—it is not the design of our Saviour to speak literally, but only to say—*This is the representation, or memorial, of my body*. This *broken bread* is a just representation, and designed as a memorial, of my *body which is broken for you*.

If you read the scriptures carefully, you will observe the very same manner of speech, which no one was ever so stupid as to mistake. When our Saviour says—*\* I am the vine, ye are the branches*: He does not mean, that he was *changed* into a *vine*, or his Disciples into *branches*: but his design was to express how the Disciples by being united to him would bring

• John xv. 5.

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forth fruit in good works, just as the branches receive nourishment from the vine they grow upon, in order to bring forth fruit. So again, when he says—*I am the door*—*John* x. 7. his design was to represent himself as the proper means of entrance into the kingdom of God; and not to say that he was changed into a real *door*. As therefore there is no reason to understand these figurative speeches contrary to common sense, so neither can there be any reason why men should abuse the words of the Sacrament to make them express absurdities, and nonsense, when consistent with all language, they may be understood agreeable to common sense.

*Par.* Truly, I think, that as God designed his institutions for *men*, i. e. for beings who have some degrees of understanding, it must be very ridiculous to imagine him to command them to do, or to believe, absurd and unreasonable things. I observe that *St Matthew* says—*He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it:* and I find that *St Mark* says—*And they all drank of it.* I suppose the remark which you would have me make upon this is—That *all* ought

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ought to drink of that cup, as well as eat of that bread.

*Min.* You have made a very just observation; and methinks it is very remarkable that such a stress should be laid upon the *drinking the cup*; that it should be said—*drink ye ALL of this*; and that it should be so particularly remarked, that *ALL* drank of it—when one considers what has happened in the Christian world, where the laity have been deprived of this part of the sacrament. But no plainness whatsoever, either in an institution, or in a prophecy of what is to come to pass, is sufficient to guard against the wickedness of man.

*Par.* So I think. But what is the meaning of what our Saviour said, when he gave his Disciples the cup and bid them drink of it—*For this*, says he, *is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*. I observed when I read over the passages in *St Luke* and *St Paul*, that they say, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood*. I own, I neither understand, how the cup can be the *New Testament* in our Saviour's



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viour's blood; nor what he means by saying, *This cup is my blood of the New Testament*. I can understand that Christ died for the remission of sins; or that God might pass over the transgressions of men, and not impute them to them; but, in good truth, I have no notion of the other part of this sentence.

*Min.* I will endeavour to assist you here. As the bread broken was a representation, and a proper memorial, of his body broken, so the wine in the cup was a representation and memorial of his blood: As the wine was poured out of the cup, so was his blood poured out of his body. When therefore our Lord in *St Matthew* says—*This is my blood, even that of the New Testament*—he means—This wine is the representation and memorial of my blood which is shed to confirm the New Covenant which God promised by his prophets to make: viz. what was contained in this promise, *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* Heb. viii. 12. The sense is the same in *St Luke* and *St Paul*—*This cup is the New Testament in my blood.* This wine

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wine in this cup is to put you in mind of the New Covenant confirmed by my blood.

*Par.* Still, Sir, I am at a loss. I understand how bread may represent a body, and wine may represent blood: but here it is said—*This wine, or cup, is the New Covenant.* How does wine represent a Covenant?

*Min.* You mistake the design of this expression. The wine represents our Saviour's blood only; which being shed to confirm the New Covenant, it is said, *This wine represents, not a new Covenant, but a New Covenant confirmed by my blood.* It is to put us in mind indeed of the New Covenant, but then it is to put us in mind of the New Covenant so confirmed, as this was.

*Par.* I believe I now apprehend you: The bread and the wine are representations, and memorials of our Saviour, who gave himself for us, and died, and by his death confirmed the Covenant with God. They are properly adapted to raise in our minds the thoughts of the  
kindness

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kindness which our Lord has shewn us, by giving himself up even to death for us, and by that means confirming the New Covenant betwixt God and us. But still I have one difficulty remaining with me; and that is, I observe that you call this a *New Covenant*, whereas it is in St *Matthew* and St *Luke*, called the *New Testament*. Now I think that a testament is the last will of any person deceased; whereas a Covenant is some sort of compact or agreement betwixt living persons. How must I understand this?

*Min.* This difficulty arises only from your not considering, that *Testament* is used in a large sense for whatever is *testified* to be the will and intention of our Lord. But it is properly here to be understood of a *Covenant* founded upon better promises than the *Old* one, which was made with the *Jews*: and which requires a different sort of conditions, the conditions of *Faith* and *Obedience* to the commands of God. This alteration of the conditions in the *Old Covenant*, makes the Christian Covenant to be called a *New* one; and when the Word *Testament* is applied, it

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is in a sense not of a man's *last will*, but in a larger sense, as it signifies a declaration and publication of one's will.

*Par.* I think I understand now this institution of our Lord. He took bread, and gave thanks to his Father, and broke it, and gave it to his Disciples: He likewise took wine, and gave it to them *all*; and he declared that these were representations and memorials of his body broken, and his blood shed, to confirm a *Covenant* made upon the conditions of faith and obedience in his followers; and of a promise on God's part to remit all past sins, upon the performance of *all* the duties of a Christian, and not of this one only.

*Min.* You take it right; and if you carefully observe what you understand, you will be able to answer any difficulties which may be started upon this subject.

*Par.* I shall be glad of that; for I own I have met with so many hard things in discourses upon this subject, that I was uneasy in my own mind, that I should  
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live to these years and yet not be capable of apprehending what I was to practise.

*Min.* You have not yet done: there is one principal thing, of which you have not yet taken notice, and that is the *end* which our Saviour mentions of this institution.

*Par.* It is true. I was so overjoy'd at finding that I understood this institution now so well, that I had like to have forgot this, which was a principal thing indeed. I see it contained in those words — *This do in remembrance of me.* I suppose the plain meaning of these words is the true one — “Eat of this bread, and “ drink of this wine in remembrance of “ me: make use of these signs to keep “ up in your minds a constant remem- “ brance of my death and sufferings.” This is certainly a wise institution, because it will keep up a remembrance of the death and sufferings of our Saviour till he shall come again.

*Min.* Certainly it will have this effect: and therefore St Paul add — *For as often*

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*as yet eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he comes.* This is a standing memorial of the death of our Lord; and his true Disciples, making use of it, declare to all the world their faith in him; and they are to continue so to do till he comes to judgment.

*Par.* I find no other end mentioned of this institution by our Saviour. Pray is there any other end mentioned in the Scripture elsewhere?

*Min.* Yes; there is: tho' it is not indeed so express and clear, nor is it mentioned as an *end*, I think, so properly as it is an *use* to be made of it. It is 1 Cor. x. 17. where St Paul says—*For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.* His meaning is—We Christians, though we are very numerous, yet we are all but *one body*, just as the several distinct pieces of bread distributed at the Lord's Supper make all but *one loaf*; and we are to be considered as at *unity* with one another and in perfect love and charity, since we all eat of that *one loaf*. Here then it is made a badge  
of



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of love and friendship ; a sign of mutual amity ; a mark of Christ's Disciples, who are to be *known by this, that they have love for one another.*

*Par.* You would have me then to consider this institution as made *only* for these *two* ends, to commemorate the death of Christ, and to be a sign of friendship amongst Christians ?

*Min.* It is not I that desire it of you ; but it is our Saviour and the Apostles, who have mentioned no other ends but these ; and consequently no other ends can be made of the Lord's Supper, without changing its *institution* and making it not *the* Lord's Supper, but our *own* Supper.

*Par.* You will give me leave now to repeat what has been said, that you may see whether I apprehend the thing as I ought. And 1<sup>st</sup>, Here is nothing else but bread and wine in the Lord's Supper : it is so when it is placed upon the table ; and it is so when it is eat and drank by the communicants. 2<sup>dly</sup>, The bread

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and wine are signs or proper remembrancers of the death of Christ, of what he suffered for our sakes seventeen hundred years ago ; and likewise signs of our love and charity with one another. Methinks this is very plain, I did expect there must be more in what is usually looked upon to be, or contain, something deep, profound, mysterious ?

*Min.* Try again if you can find any thing else either in the *institution* itself in the *Gospels*, or in the *Epistles*, which should make you be so scrupulous. If you find nothing else—do not make your duty harder to be understood, than our Lord and Master has made it.

*Par.* I own I find nothing else in the Scriptures : but then I find a great deal more in books which I have read. You tell me it is bread and wine even after consecration ; and I own the Scriptures say nothing to the contray : But then our Church says, that it is *the body and blood of Christ, which is verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.* This place has always perplexed me,

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me, and made me very uneasy, because I never could have any notion how the bread was made the *body* of Christ, or how it was *verily and indeed* taken and received by faithful more than by wicked men, since both alike receive the very same elements of bread and wine.

*Min.* Remember your rule, I mean the Scriptures, and steadily adhere to them. Our Saviour took bread and *blessed* it, or *gave thanks* to God for it. His giving thanks to God made no alteration in the bread or wine, nor changed it from what it was to something else. When now bread and wine is *set apart* for the use of the Lord's Supper, the setting it apart to that use makes no alteration in it, more than the setting apart any thing else for any particular use makes an alteration in the thing so appropriated. When the Minister therefore now a-days sets apart for the use of the communicants bread and wine, he does nothing to the bread and wine but set it apart, and consequently the bread and wine is bread and wine still. The words he uses to set apart the bread do not make any change in the  
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the bread : and were he to use any particular form of thanksgiving to God for the bread and wine before him on the table, all the purposes of its being a Sacrament would be compleatly answered. Our Saviour ordered bread and wine to be taken ; but he gave no positive form of benediction, or consecration. The Church has wisely directed the form and manner of setting the bread and wine apart for the purposes intended ; but never designed to intimate, that the words used should change the bread into flesh, or the wine into blood.

*Par.* But how then is the *body and blood of Christ verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper* ? I own the bread and wine are not changed : If therefore the body and blood of Christ be *verily and indeed* taken, they must be *spiritually* taken : for if they be not *bodily*, they must be *spiritually*, or not at all.

*Min.* To eat bread spiritually, and to drink wine spiritually, is a direct absurdity ; unless by *spiritual* eating of *bodily* things, you mean the eating them to *spiritual purposes*, and with *spiritual views* ;  
and

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and in this sense it is easily possible to eat bread *spiritually whilst it continues bread*: If any thing else is meant, I readily own my ignorance of it; nor do I think it any shame to be ignorant of what cannot possibly be explained. The bread and wine then is the representation of the body and blood of Christ, and figuratively is called his *body and blood*. The thing intended or *signified* by these signs is the body of Christ. To receive or take the body and blood of Christ, is the same as to take the Lord's Supper, that is, to receive and take what Christ appointed to be taken, according to his institution, in *remembrance* of him, which all the faithful, or true believers, do.

I grant the expression in the Catechism to be very hard, and easily liable to be much perverted; and therefore I should be glad, if (in due time) it were removed. But since we have it, it is fit to understand it in the best manner we can. The bread is figuratively called the body of Christ; *i. e.* his body is justly represented, and as it were set before us, by bread. When therefore it is said, that  
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the body and blood of Christ are *verily and indeed* taken and *received* by the faithful in the Lord's Supper, the meaning is (when stripped of the figurative words) —The thing signified by the bread and wine is the body of Christ broken and the blood of him shed; which body and blood so broken and shed are *remembered* by the faithful, according to the institution of Christ.

*Par.* But, Sir, the words are—the *body and blood* of Christ, not the things which *signify* the body and blood of Christ, are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.

*Min.* True; but remember that we cannot take or receive any thing on this occasion, but what is commanded by our Lord to be given to us. Now nothing is commanded to be given but bread and wine appointed for this particular purpose: and consequently no more can be understood as taken and received by the faithful, but bread and wine according to Christ's institution in remembrance of him,



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him, which is figuratively called his body and blood.

*Par.* By this meaning of these words, I perceive you do not imagine any *real presence* of our Saviour in the Sacrament, but would have me take the bread and wine as representations or memorials only of the body of Christ.

*Min.* I would have you do what our Saviour commanded. If there be no *real presence* promised, or declared, what right have you to talk of one? or why should you torment yourself about the *manner* of our Saviour's being in the bread, when you have not one word of such language in the Testament? What is this imagination founded on; but our Saviour's saying of the bread—*This is my body*? People might as well conceive our Saviour *really present*, in a particular ineffable manner in every thing that is *consecrated*, or set apart, (if consecration causes or occasions a *real presence*) as imagine a real presence from this figurative expression.

*Par.*

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*Par.* I perceive then that I ought to look no further than the scriptures for this institution: and if I concern myself with no more, I am not to blame. Have the Scriptures said more than what we have already discoursed about the nature of this Sacrament?

*Min.* The Scriptures have said no more about the Sacrament itself; but have said some things in relation to receiving it, which well deserve your thoughts. You may observe that St Paul says, 1 Cor. x. 16. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

*Par.* Very true: and this passage has always seemed to me hard to be understood. Pray, Sir, what is the meaning of it?

*Min.* The Apostle is warning the *Corinthians* to flee from idolatry: and shews them that if they eat of these sacri-

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sacrifices offered unto *Demons* (who were all *Idols*) they by that professed themselves in a state of *friendship* with them. The *Jews* by eating the sacrifices offered to God, eat of, i. e. *partook of the altar* which is God's *table*, and thus professed themselves in a state of *friendship* with God: In like manner the *Gentiles* eating at the table of *Idols* professed themselves to be in a state of *friendship* with *Idols*. Now Christians cannot be in a state of *friendship* with two such contrary masters: They cannot *partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of Demons*. They drink at the Lord's table the *cup of blessing*, in commemoration of the blood of Christ shed for us, and they eat the bread broken in commemoration of his body broken for us; They therefore declare themselves in *friendship* with Christ.

*Par.* This I understand: But why is the cup called *the cup of blessing*.

*Min.* The meaning is, that cup is the cup which we *bless*, or particularly *give thanks* to God for. We thank God for sending his Son into the world, whose  
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kindness in shedding his blood for us we now commemorate by drinking of the cup.

*Par.* But how is the *cup* the *communion of the blood*; or the *bread*, the *communion of the body* of Christ?

*Min.* The word *communion* signifies, a *common partaking* of any thing. So that the Apostle means this—"The cup  
" which is given to *all*, in our assem-  
" blies or public meetings, is the *com-*  
" *mon partaking* of that which repre-  
" sents, and is designed to keep in re-  
" membrance, and is therefore called the  
" *blood of Christ*: The *bread* is the *com-*  
" *mon partaking* of that which repre-  
" sents the body, and is therefore called  
" the *body of Christ*."

*Par.* Be pleased, Sir, to shew me the connexion of this whole passage.

*Min.* To eat and drink together was the known sign of friendship. To eat at an Idol's table, or of the things offered to Idols, was to own a friendship with them: to eat at Christ's table, was to own  
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own a friendship with him. Now, when we *join in common*, in eating at Christ's table, and bless God for the bread and wine we partake of, we *openly* declare ourselves his friends by partaking of what is designed to represent his body and blood, and which is eminently called his body and blood. We should therefore never join in any sort of act which may be construed a joining with, or friendship for, Idols.

*Par.* I understand all this perfectly well.

*Min.* We may therefore now proceed to another passage of the same Apostle, mentioned 1 Cor. xi. 27, &c. *Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

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*Par.* I am glad to hear you mention this; for I think you now are come to the great difficulty, and which really has often affrighted me from the Communion. These are hard things, that a man *that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks his own damnation; and is guilty of the body and blood of Christ.* This is a matter of such mighty danger, that I have sometimes wondered that any venture at all upon it: for they are very likely to *kindle God's wrath against themselves, and to provoke him to plague them with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death.* The good received is scarce an equivalent to the hazard run.

*Min.* You seem to talk as one really in a fright: compose yourself a little, and calmly examine into the Apostle's meaning: perhaps you will have different notions of these things; and will see a consistent easiness in the whole.

*Par.* I shall rejoice at that, for to deal ingenuously, these hard sayings, both in the Apostle and in the communion-service, have



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have kept me from this duty, and I think would ever have kept me from it, had not I heard your encouragement to come to the communion, and your declaration that it was all an easy as well as an intelligible duty.

*Min.* You will find what I said to be true. Read therefore these words of the Apostle carefully, and let us examine into their meaning.

*Par.* I find that some of these *Corinthians* came *drunken* to, or made themselves *drunk* at, the Lord's Supper. v. 21.

*Min.* Very right; and therefore you will acknowledge that they *eat and drank unworthily*.

*Par.* No doubt; such men were very wicked, and very richly deserved to suffer for their sins.

*Min.* These men, and all that are of the same sort, are *unworthy*: and if you observe, you will see that they are charged with *not discerning the Lord's body*. They made no difference betwixt the Supper of

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the Lord, and one of their own entertainments where they might eat and drink to satiety, without considering that the end of one was to refresh their bodies, the end of the other was *only* to remember their dying Saviour. There is an essential difference betwixt the Lord's Supper and a bodily repast : and it is the duty of every Christian to *discern*, or, make a *difference* between, these. If therefore men will come in such a manner as to make *no difference* ; if they will come *drunken*, and disordered, to the Lord's Supper, you must own *unworthiness* in such, and a not *discerning the Lord's body*.

*Par.* This is certainly *unworthiness*, and such men it is plain do not regard the duty they are about : but are there not others *unworthy* as well as these ?

*Min.* Yes. Where the reason is the same, there is the same unworthiness, *e. g.* To come *profanely* or *irreverently* without regarding the design, or the institution of the Sacrament, is to come *unworthily*. And such a man with such a disposition must provoke instead of pleasing our Saviour, because he offers the utmost  
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indignity to him, who is the judge of all men's actions.

*Par.* I readily acknowledge, that such men must aggravate their crimes instead of lessening them by such *unworthy* behaviour.

*Min.* But besides this; suppose any number of men were to come to the Table of the Lord, not to remember the death of Christ, but to band themselves and others in secret wickedness; to secure to themselves secrecy in detestable actions, such as *conspiracies, assassinations, murders*, and such like villanies. You see this is *unworthy* of Christians, and in consequence this *eating and drinking is eating and drinking unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body*; nay I will add, it is *eating and drinking damnation to themselves*, because it is *increasing* wickedness, instead of *forsaking* it.

*Par.* I readily admit, that this too is *unworthiness* to the last degree.

*Min.* Again. Suppose that a man comes to the Lord's Table *without repentance* for past faults, and without resolution

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tion of amendment for the time to come, —This must be a contempt of Christ, who has commanded *repentance* where sin has been committed; and a contempt of his ordinance, which requires that a man should *first* examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup, 1 Cor. xi. 28. The life of a Christian ought to be a life of holiness and virtue; and he is obliged to conform his actions to the rules which our Saviour has laid down. He therefore that will not endeavour to amend his life, or to forsake sin, and yet comes to the *Lord's Table*, must disregard our Saviour, and must aggravate his guilt by openly offering an affront to our Lord.

*Par.* I see by this, that, in general, by *unworthiness* you mean, coming to the Lord's Supper in any manner *unworthy* of a disciple of our Lord. But then I fear that to come to this Sacrament, after *breach of the promise* of amendment, will be an *unworthiness* which will aggravate one's condemnation. I own that I have heretofore approached the Lord's Table with resolutions of forsaking sin, which have proved ineffectual: and surely it is a great aggravation of my fault to have  
added

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added a breach of a solemn vow : I consider myself as a debtor, and I have promised my creditor payment. Now I not only have been guilty of not paying my debt, but I have moreover broke my word, and therefore have forfeited my credit.

*Min.* I am glad you have put this case, because I believe it a very common one. Consider therefore, *1st*, That your resolutions when made were very *good*, the effect of a then present good disposition ; and as they proceeded from a good end, and were good means to that end, and the likeliest way to succeed, they were really good acts. If therefore you are afraid of eating and drinking *unworthily*, because you are not always, at all times, and all seasons, as good, as once upon a time you wished to be, you must think God to be a hard master, rigid, severe, inexorable : and you must suppose it a duty to abstain from a present acknowledged good act, for fear least you should hereafter be guilty of a bad one. But *2dly*, What is your promise ? Is it any thing but a declaration of a present fixed resolution so to live as to avoid, as much

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much as you can, all sin? You promised to do your best to check all inclinations to sin, and to use your best endeavours to regulate your passions, and to bring them into subjection to reason. Now to exert ourselves on such occasions is doing all we can, and all we mean by making such promises: and if we fail in the performance, this is not a reason to keep us from the Sacrament, but to make us more upon our guard at another time. But 3dly, Put the case at the worst; you promised, and you broke your promise. This is not so bad as never to promise amendment at all, and under that cover never to *design* amendment. It is certainly better to intend and promise to pay ones debts, than never to intend at all to pay them: in the one case you only *disappoint* your creditor, and this too when you do your best to pay him; in the other you *design* to *defraud* him of his debt; and which is worst, do you judge?

*Par.* True; but you will own that I have broke my promise; and never to make a promise or take up a resolution, is better than to add a violation of promise to my former sins.

*Min.*



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*Min.* If you mean by *promise, strong resolutions*, tell me what there is in Scripture which excludes him that has failed in his resolutions, and repents, from the benefit of pardon? Is remission of sin promised in the Gospel only to such or such particular crimes? Or is the breach of a good resolution a crime which has forgiveness, neither in this life, neither in that which is to come? Be easy; for a repenting sinner is always a worthy communicant; and pardon is promised to him that repents.

*Par.* You tell me then that *unworthiness* consists always in doing such things as are unfit for a Christian to do; such as, being *profane, vicious*, and without repentance: I easily see that such men must aggravate their faults. But the Apostle says—*they eat and drink their own damnation*—And—*They are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*. What is the meaning of these expressions?

*Min.* The easiest way I can take to express the meaning of the first is, to put a case. Suppose a Jew, believing nothing  
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of Christianity, were to offer himself to be baptized, and were to profess himself to be a Christian, would he not be baptized to his own damnation? *i. e.* Would he not increase his guilt, and in course his condemnation, by such an open insult upon the Lord? Just so if a Christian comes to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with such a disposition as an unconverted *Jew* would to the Sacrament of Baptism, the effect or consequence would be the same, a high aggravation of sin and guilt, and he would *eat and drink his damnation, i. e.* increase his guilt by acting *unworthily*.

The other expression is more difficult. *To be guilty of the body and blood of our Lord*, seems to be something more than to be guilty of not treating *the body and blood* of Christ, as it ought to be treated. He that misuses or perverts the design of the Sacrament, is certainly guilty of not acting as becomes a Christian, and is guilty of behaving himself towards the Lord in an *unworthy* manner. But to be *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, is so to act as if Christ was not the Lord but some impostor,

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postor, who therefore *deserved* to have his body broken, and his blood shed. The People who come to the table of the Lord in a manner unsuitable to the nature of the institution, can have but little sense of the truth of Christianity: They must look upon the death of Christ as *just*, and *tread under foot*, as *useless*, *the Son of God*; and esteem the *blood of the Covenant* as unholy. Heb. x. 29.

Or if you will take these words in a less rigid manner, the least they imply is, That they which come to the Lord's table *unworthily*, are guilty of *misusing* what our Lord has instituted in so serious and sacred a manner, and what he has called his *body and blood*. They look upon it as a common ordinary entertainment, and not as a remembrance of his death; and thus they are guilty of depreting what ought to be most solemnly and seriously observed.

*Par.* If this be the meaning of these words, I do not see that any can be deterred from this duty but very ill, profane,

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fane, and irreligious persons ; such as never repent of their sins, and such as come to the Lord's table with a resolution never to repent. And such ought to be deterred from doing themselves a mischief.

*Min.* I told you, that these expressions of the Apostle were not so terrible to any *serious* Christian as you imagined ; for these inconveniencies, be they ever so great, have no relation to good and virtuous Christians, who are apt to be most affected and most affrighted by them. The very apprehensions such men are under, manifestly shew a *goodness* of disposition ; a mind far from profane or irreligious, and far from any purpose of continuing in sin.

*Par.* I hope I am not of a wicked and profane mind ; but yet I own I am fearful that I am not so good as I ought to be : and therefore I have sometimes abstained from communicating, merely from the apprehensions of hazard and danger in my coming.

*Min.*

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*Min.* But pray consider what you have got by this. Whether you do, or do not communicate, it is necessary to *examine yourself whether you repent truly of your former sins*; and whether you *steadfastly purpose to lead a new life*. It is necessary to have *a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death*; and it is necessary to be *in charity with all men*. What is there more than this, necessary to make a good communicant? So that whether you do, or do not, communicate, you are obliged, you see, to live as if you constantly did communicate, or else you cannot be approved a good and faithful servant of your Lord.

*Par.* By this I perceive you would have me communicate very regularly and constantly: But methinks this argument seems to me to prove more than you intended; *viz.* an uselessness of communicating, since I am obliged to live as exactly and virtuously without as with communicating. Pray what is the use of communicating?

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*Min.*

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*Min.* I cannot suffer you to leave this point with such a notion in your head. I will tell you the uses presently. But what I was saying was, every Christian is obliged constantly to maintain good works, and to adorn his profession with virtue. You said, you had abstained from the Communion through fear of the hazard in communicating. I add now to what I said before, that this is very absurd, and very weak reasoning; and if you were to apply it to that point, I do not see but it would make you quit Christianity itself, and renounce the religion you were baptized into.

*Par.* God forbid! I hope no such consequence as that will follow.

*Min.* Consider. To be frightened from the Lord's Supper by the harsh expressions made use of in scripture is, you suppose, fit and right. Upon this principle then I would say, you ought to be frightened from ever embracing Christianity itself; for there are very terrible denunciations of God's wrath in it against wicked and  
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unrighteous men. They are threatned with *perdition*, and *everlasting destruction* from the *presence of the Lord*, and to be put in a state and place *where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched*. Now I say, that it is just as reasonable to be frightened from *all religion*, because of the severity of future punishments; or it is as right to renounce Christianity itself, because it is a hazardous institution, and frightful things are threatned, as it is to abstain from the Lord's Table, because there are severe denunciations threatned against such particular persons as are *unworthy*, and keep themselves unworthy of the benefits which they might receive.

*Par.* I am fully convinced that I was mistaken in my apprehension of what you said. Be pleased, Sir, now to tell me what are the benefits which may be received from the Communion?

*Min.* Your Catechism tells you, *The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.*

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*Par.* It is true ; but yet I think that these words want an explication ; for to me they seem hard and obscure.

*Min.* I observed to you before, that the bread and wine is not the body, but the sign or representation or memorial of the body of Christ : so that the thing which refreshes and strengthens our mind is that which the bread and wine only represents, *viz.* Christ dying for us. When we are hungry and thirsty, we grow faint and weak, and our bodies decay apace ; and unless they are supplied with nourishment they will soon die. So, our souls when they are not exercised in meditation, in virtuous acts, and in religious practices, grow languid, and careless in all goodness, and, in the moral sense, *die*. When they grow in good habits, and men are conscious that they are acceptable to God, their minds are *refreshed* and *comforted*, and they grow stronger and stronger in their good dispositions.

*Par.* You seem to me to explain this in a mere natural way ; and do not give  
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me any encouragment to hope for *supernatural* *graces* and *assistances* accompanying the reception of the Sacrament.

*Min.* You have read all that the scriptures say upon this subject; and if God has made no particular promises to the Sacrament, you have no reason to expect or hope for any performances from him in it. Do your duty, and you will find great benefit from it.

*Par.* What is the benefit I shall find?

*Min.* If you carefully and religiously remember the death of Christ, you will grow in *faith*, and *hope*, and *charity*: You will habituate yourself to think of your duty in its fullest extent: You will have frequent opportunity of reflecting upon the relation you stand in to Christ your master: This will bring into your mind the obligation you are under to him, and to your neighbour, and to yourself: It will give you an opportunity of confirming yourself in all goodness: and by these natural means you will grow in that which is fit and right, and thus  
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make yourself finally accepted by God, who has promised his rewards to such *as by faithful continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.*

*Par.* I must own I thought that you would have told me, that there were some peculiar *extraordinary graces* annexed to the elements: but as I found none in myself whenever I did receive the Sacrament, I concluded myself from thence to be an unworthy communicant, and therefore I had almost resolved never to communicate any more.

*Min.* It is with you as I have found it with many others. They think the Sacrament operates upon their minds as charms do. They expect that it should work a virtuous disposition of mind they know not why or how: and expect to feel the effect without any act of their own. Whereas all positive institutions are suited to produce good habits, and are to be used as means to goodness: and where the act is natural and fitly adapted to that end, it should be used as such; and not be dressed up in such a manner, as must do  
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a real damage to that for which it was designed as a service. Remember that the scriptures have made no *promise* of any *supernatural grace* to be annexed to the elements : and therefore to expect such is, as the Apostle calls it, *to hope against hope, i. e.* without any grounds or reason.

*Par.* I perceive then from all this, that I must strive to confirm myself in virtuous practices ; that I must not imagine, that when I have received the Sacrament my sins are pardoned, and I am absolved, and that I may begin to sin afresh ; but that I am uniformly and constantly to proceed in virtue : I find that nothing but goodness of life is of real use, or will make me accepted by God : and that the Sacrament is to be used as a proper means to acquire this habitual goodness. As I see this whole matter is rational and intelligible, and as it is consistent with moral agency, and with the nature of religion, and gives no encouragement to any vice, I will from henceforth endeavour to go and practise according to it.

*Min.*

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*Min.* I commend your resolution, and heartily wish you good success in your undertaking.

*Par.* If I understand you right, you consider this instituted rite, as a *means* to virtue. The benefit of complying with it consists in its tendency and fitness to make a man a *better* man, and to produce in our minds an habitual disposition to goodness.

*Min.* If you remember the end mentioned by our *Saviour* and by *St Paul*, it is certain that there is a fitness in this means to its end. And if you think of the uses, which are obvious, you cannot but see, that the partaking of this rite will excite in you many good reflections: and when the impression is frequently renewed the good thoughts will be revived, and will grow more and more strong; and good principles will be cultivated; and all the good that can be expected from thought, and meditation, and seriousness, and attention, will be promoted. And as the rite itself is peculiarly adapted  
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to these good uses,—you cannot fail of great benefit from frequent Communion.

*Par.* I see a good reason now, why St Paul said, *As oft as you eat this bread and drink this cup*; intimating plainly that we ought to communicate, *often*. For by *often* communicating, we *often* exercise our minds in a proper manner, and strengthen our good dispositions, and moral habits, and every particular virtue which we endeavour to confirm, or improve.

*Min.* You do so: And you may see as strong a reason to conclude that this, and all instituted rites, are no better than mere useless rites, unless they produce, or promote real *goodness*.

*Par.* Do you say, that this Sacrament is a mere trifling, insignificant ceremony unless *moral goodness* attends it?

*Min.* No doubt it is. The end of it was goodness: the benefits of it are goodness: and our Saviour when he instituted it, designed it as subservient for  
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that purpose, and it would be *superstition*, or something like *sorcery*, if it were not made use of to this purpose.

*Par.* I shall for the future make this good use of it : And God grant that I may keep my resolutions fixed, and improve myself as I ought.

One thing I would observe farther, that you have never mentioned any thing about the sixth chapter of St *John*.

*Min.* That is true. But it did not proceed from forgetfulness, but because it has no relation to the subject. That discourse of Christ was spoke long *before* his death : and it is only a figurative manner of shewing the necessity of *faith* in him, under the terms *bread* and *flesh*; and as it does not relate to the subject, it is neither necessary nor proper to speak to it upon this occasion.

*Par.* I thank you for the pains you have been at : and I hope it will be for my Good. I heartily pray that God would grant it may.

*Min.*

*Min. Amen. And the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you always.*

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*A Prayer at coming up to the Lord's Table.*

**I**T is, O Lord, with the most grateful remembrance and sense of my Redeemer's Passion, that I approach thy Table. Let this my eating and drinking at it, be deemed a sign or mark of friendship between Thee and me : and may I never be guilty of any action which may be imputed to me as a violation of what I here profess. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus, Christ's sake. *Amen.*

*A short Prayer after receiving the Bread.*

**A**Ccept, O Lord, of this my imperfect obedience in remembrance of the death of thy Son ; and let my present

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sent good wishes and desires increase and grow in me unto perfection: that I may for the future live as becomes a Disciple of Christ, renouncing whatever is contrary to the rules of the Gospel, and particularly maintaining that Love and Charity which he has made the mark of his Disciples. Hear my Prayer, O God, and accept me in thy beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*A short Prayer after receiving the Cup.*

**I** Have great cause, O Lord, to be thankful; and to remember that the blood of Christ was shed for me, and for many for the remission of sins. Let mine, O God, be blotted out, and let me be admitted into thy favour, that I may finally obtain everlasting life with the Saints in light, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*A Meditation and Prayer suited to the  
occasion.*

THIS solemn meeting is in remembrance of what our Saviour did and suffered for us. He who had no sin, and in whose mouth there was no guile, voluntarily submitted to death, even the death of the cross, for our sakes. He submitted to have his body pierced, and his blood shed, and at last to die, in a public, even ignominious manner, who had never done any thing that could deserve death. Multitudes were spectators of his death; and were evidences that it was *real*, certain, 'beyond debate. The shedding of his blood was in obedience to thy will, O God, who by that means, and by raising him again, hast *shewn* to all, the possibility and the reality of a future state, where our souls may exist, and dwell with thee to all eternity: Thou hast not only given us this argument taken from our *senses*, but thou hast likewise promised through him eternal life to all that are ready and willing to accept him as their Lord and Master. It is, O Lord,  
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with the gratefulest remembrance of his love and kindness to mankind, that I now in this manner have professed myself his Disciple. He has promised in *thy* name, the forgiveness of our sins; and by his death he hath ratified the Covenant betwixt Thee, and all such as are ready and willing to believe in him, and to submit to thy laws. Do thou, O Lord, strengthen my faith; strengthen me in my resolutions to obey his will: Let me not fall into any temptations that may prove too hard for my weak nature: And so direct me in the ways of thy providence, that I may pass through this life to another, unblameable and irreproveable in thy sight. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

F I N I S